

To Live in Love

By FR. JOSEPH M. CHAMPLIN

A columnist and film critic for the Los Angeles Times wrote recently about "A Mess of Movies Look at the Mess of Marriage." Their woes include boredom, suffocation and husbands who are frustrated, overworked, inert, unfaithful or all four.

In his opening paragraph the Hollywood writer observed:

"Having spent more than half a century persuading us that an endless succession of 'Theys' lived happily ever after, the movies almost as one have now coughed nervously, toed the deep-pile wall-to-wall carpet, averted our gaze and confessed that that isn't quite the whole story.

"In fact, it's hard to remember a recent movie which dared to suggest that the couple would live happily through next weekend, let alone ever after.

"Like our society, the movies are taking a hard and worried look at marriage, weighing it and finding it less wanted than it used to be.

Young marriageable persons know, unfortunately, that "The Graduate" and "Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice," for example, are not mere dream concoctions of the cinema, but painful slices of real life.

High and rising divorce rates plus the marital misery of many who still live together but no longer love each other, trouble those ready for matrimony. They wonder what happened to these people along the way and question if the same thing will occur in their lives.

Engaged couples love deeply, but in the face of such harsh evidence they legitimately ask if the love is real and will last,

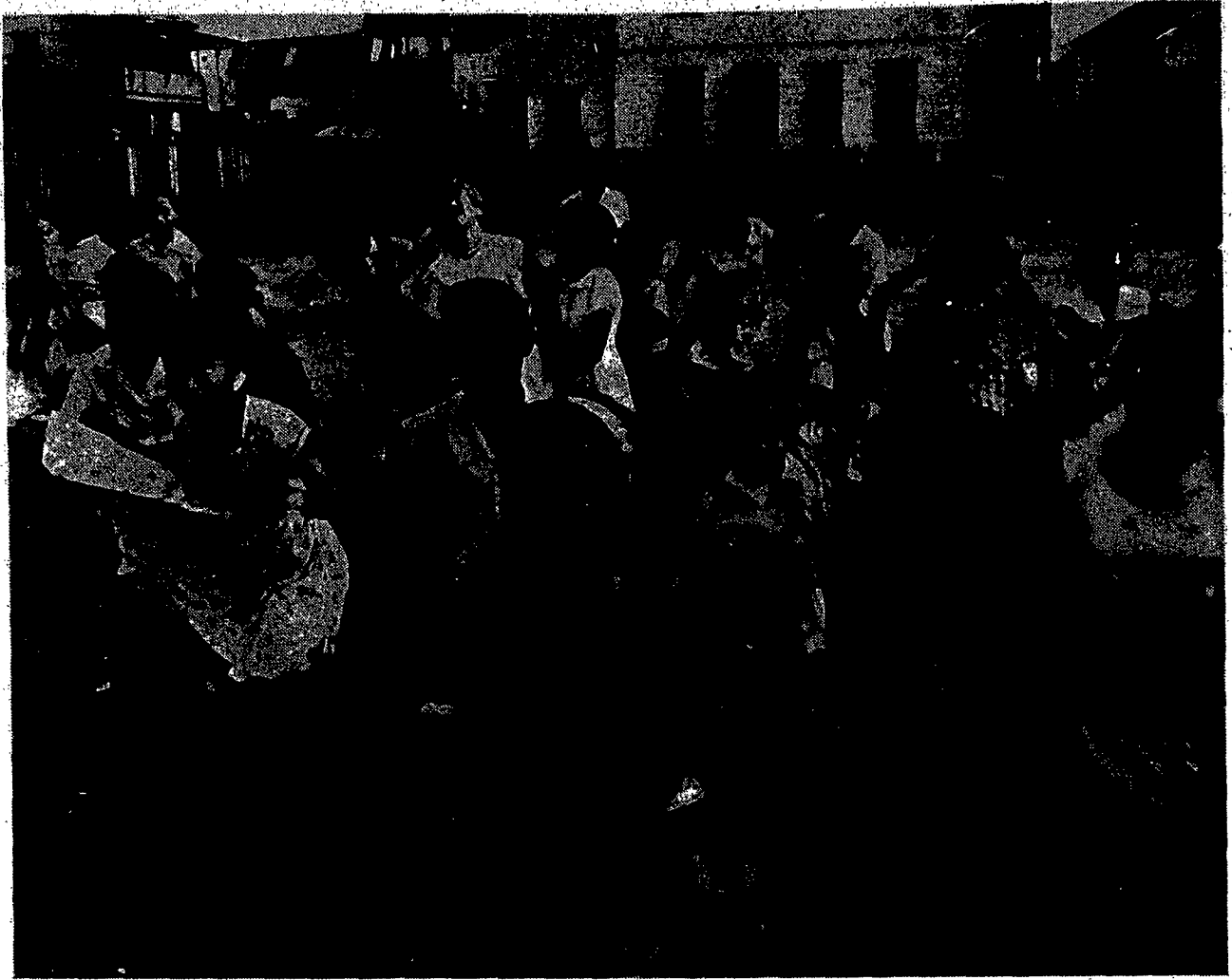
if the risk is worth it, if they will find happiness and bliss in marriage or discover bitterness and hell on earth.

Richard Dali and Jerilyn Jerry viewed those movies, weighed these alternatives and then vowed, on May 16 in St. Thomas of Canterbury Church at Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York, to be true in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, promised to love and honor each other all the days of their lives.

Like hundreds of couples in the United States this spring and summer, Jeri and Dick planned their own wedding ceremony, picked out the readings, prayers, and blessings, produced a program booklet for the guests. A paragraph of welcome in this leaflet set the tone for a warm and personal service which involved the entire congregation.

The pastor of St. Thomas helped. Monsignor George R. Rosso several months ago purchased a handsome silver cup with handles specifically designed for use at nuptial Masses. It seems to work particularly well. Normally bride and groom gingerly raise chalice to their lips and consume but a drop or two of the Lord's Precious Blood. I found the couple more relaxed and comfortable holding Monsignor Rosso's unique "loving cup" and better disposed to drink Christ's Blood instead of merely sipping it.

Some parish priests (Father John Beno in Pueblo, Colorado comes to my mind) obtain a similar, but ceramic cup for the wedding and present it to husband and wife as a gift after the nuptial Mass. They are encouraged to reserve it for use on the anniversary each year.



The flow of spontaneous laughter and action can make leisure time a pleasure rather than "the devil's playground". (NC Photo, courtesy Peace Corps)

Richard and Jerilyn were anxious that friends and relatives might share in the joy and love of "our most beautiful day." In this the young lovers were following the intent of the revised ritual which states: "At the words 'Let us offer each other the sign of peace,' the married couple and all present show their peace and love for one another in an appropriate way." They felt the sign of peace would be an excellent opportunity to communicate love, joy, and harmony.

After the nuptial blessing, they embraced, then communicated a greeting of peace to the celebrant. Next, the groom

walked to his brother, the best man, shook hands and said, "Peace be with you, Sam." The bride stepped to her sister, the maid of honor, kissed this college senior and whispered, "Barbara, may peace be with you."

The priest, at their request, addressed those in the pews with these words. "Dick and Jeri obviously are very much in love and at peace. They would like to share these sentiments with all of you and hope you, too, feel the love for one another and the peace with all men which they have in their hearts on this day. They ask you to turn to those around

you, shake hands or greet the person in some way, and say, 'Peace be with you' or 'Shalom' or 'God bless you' or whatever seems best."

In an age of war and bitterness, in a period when marriage is "less wanted," perhaps more than we realize people are thirsting for peace and love, looking for courageous persons who will promise to care for each other until death do them part. Richard and Jerilyn Dali's wedding ceremony gave guests 45 minutes exposure to just those things, then sent them home in peace, with renewed encouragement to live on in love.

Enjoying Life

By Fr. Carl J. Pfeifer, S.J.

Most people like to have a good time. They enjoy the pleasures of life that are available to them and usually desire those that are still beyond their reach. This is nothing new in human experience.

The major difference between contemporary culture and previous periods of history with regard to pleasure is perhaps only in the number and variety of pleasures available.

Because the drive for pleasure is so strong a force for good or evil, for happiness or frustration, people in every age have taken some philosophical or religious stance toward enjoyment in general or toward some pleasures in particular. The reactions cover the whole spectrum from viewing pleasurable enjoyment as the very purpose of life to considering it life's deepest threat.

Christians down through the centuries have seemingly fluctuated in their evaluation of pleasure. While few Christian groups seem to have considered the pursuit of pleasure as the ultimate basis of human happiness, many groups have taken very strong positions against the compatibility of pleasure and holiness. Usually their condemnations or suspicions focused on particular pleasures like sex and drink, but some went so far as to condemn all bodily pleasures because they considered the body as evil.

Although the Church has officially condemned the extremist view of pleasure as evil, the feeling of many Christians today is often somewhat confused and marked by tension. Strains of Jansenism and Pur-



itanism are still found in American culture and in Christian churches.

How should a Christian feel about enjoying pleasure? The Scriptures suggest a balanced, down to earth attitude toward the pleasures of life and their enjoyment.

Already in the Old Testament it is recognized that the enjoyment of pleasure is a normal part of God's plan for man's happiness. In fact the joys of living are an integral part of God's promise to His people. The blessings given by the Patriarchs to their sons are rich in the expectation of a healthy enjoyment of the good things of life. God clearly calls His people to enjoy the pleasures of married love. He expects them to take pleasure in the birth of a child.

God wants men and women to find joy in work and to take pleasure in productive labor. They are to enjoy eating and drinking. In fact God gives men wine to help them be cheerful. The Scriptures praise the human joys that help a person forget his troubles and enjoy good health. The message of the Old Testament toward pleasure is that it is a part of God's plan for men's happiness and holiness.

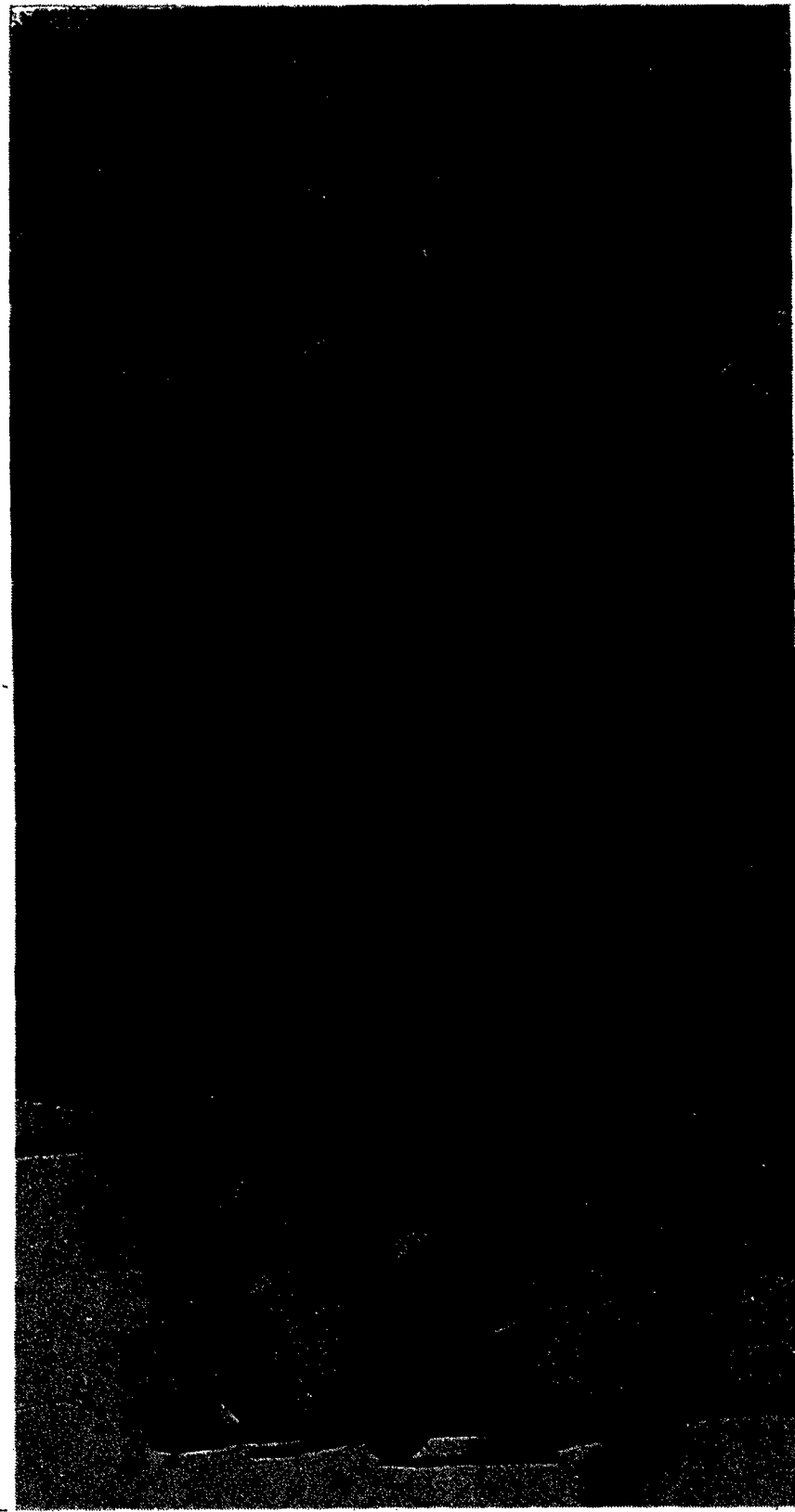
Jesus' own life exemplifies and confirms this positive appreciation of enjoyment. He does not speak often of pleasure, but the Gospels reveal Him as enjoying the ordinary

pleasures of life. We read of Him sitting in the shade after a hot day, enjoying a drink of cool water. His enemies find fault with Him because He and His disciples do not fast but enjoy eating and drinking. At Cana He even provides wine for the wedding guests after they had depleted their supply.

The Scriptures, however, are not naive. Isaiah and Jeremia, Jesus, John and Paul and James, were painfully aware of the sufferings and evils that arose from the pursuit of pleasure. They knew that men killed, stole, raped, and lied in their frenzied attempts to enjoy pleasurable experiences. But the recognition of the abuse of pleasure, of the excessive pursuit of enjoyment, in no way lessened the biblical writers' appreciation of the value of pleasure in man's life.

It is not food, or sex, or music, or friendship that is in any way evil; rather it is the selfish sense of values and perspective that a person has which pollutes enjoyment.

What this suggests is that pleasures are to be enjoyed with moderation, a moderation motivated not by fear or suspicion of pleasure, but by love of self, of others, and of God. If the seeking of pleasure becomes an over-riding concern or value in a person's life, it actually ceases to be creative of human fulfillment and leads to an emptiness that ultimately even deadens the pleasure itself.



A lasting and deeply felt love is what many young couples are searching for despite some harsh evidence of marital problems they may see in the world around them. (National Catholic Photo by Frank Hoy)

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